

Diz Minnitt speaking notes

Evidence

- Karen Bryan's research in 2007 identified **60%** of children in contact with the Youth Justice System had Speech, Language and Communication needs (SLCN).
- In the research this figure rose to **66-90%** when looking at those children in custody
- In 2018 we got the first data from the Youth Justice Board after the RCSLT Screening tool for SLCN was included in Asset Plus, this showed that nationally this figure for SLCN in the Youth Justice System was **71%**
- In Milton Keynes we have a Speech and Language Therapist assesses **all** children working with the Youth Justice Team and we have seen this figure increase year on year as the overall cohort of children in the Youth Justice System has reduced, meaning that children with SLCN are the most disproportionately overrepresented group across all ethnicities:
 - **2019 /2020** – the percentage with confirmed **SLCN** was **80%**
 - **2020/2021** – this increased to **84%**
 - **2021/2022** – another rise to **87%**
 - **2022/2023** (latest full year data) – increases to **88%**

Of all of these children our previous data has shown that of those who have SLCN only **15%** have their SLCN identified before coming into contact with the Youth Justice Team

- When we look at our Promoting Reintegration Reducing Exclusion (PRRE) project where we undertake free SLCN assessments by a Speech and Language Therapist with children in both secondary and primary schools who are at the greatest risk of exclusion we identify that **98%** of those assessed have SLCN, with only **6%** having been identified before we conducted our assessments. We also provide the school with free training for staff around the identification of SLCN (and frequently associated other additional needs) and effective ways of working with these needs. This also includes thinking about the way the school system works internally (I have attached the presentation I used at the Welsh Assembly meeting on 24th January 2024 which gives some more detail and insight into this).
- This means that children are still not being identified, however there are some important lessons we can take immediately.

- Behaviour is a symptom (not the cause). The results from the PRRE project – the vast majority of the children assessed were at risk of exclusion because of their behaviour, but almost all (98%) also had an underlying SLCN that in the vast majority of cases had not been identified (and arguably should have been). So when there are concerns about behaviour, about presentation “Think Language First” - exercise professional curiosity, dig deeper.
- In the Youth Justice System (and any other system where there is evidence that over 50% are likely to have SLCN) – **Screen Out** don't **Screen In** – i.e start from the logical premise that if **the majority** of children in the system (i.e any figure of 50.1% and above) then you **assume** that a child in the system **has SLCN** unless and until you evidence otherwise (Screen Out). That way systems can be designed to routinely assume and potentially therefore meet a number of the most common and prevalent needs as standard before the child's individual needs are confirmed.
- In the absence of being able to do everything we should focus on incremental progression such as assessing children at some key pinch points in the system:
 - Entry to Primary School
 - Transition to Secondary School
 - At risk of exclusion or planned move to Alternative Education / Pupil Referral Unit
 - At risk of or entry to Youth Justice System / Children's Social Work involvement (particularly involvement in or at risk of Exploitation or coming into Care)
 - Greater links to the role of Virtual School in driving SLCN assessments